7th Sunday of Ordinary Time, February 19, 2017

Leviticus 19: 1-2, 17-18

Psalm 103

1 Corinthians 3: 16-23

Matthew 5: 38-48

Today I find in our readings politics, pornography, and perfection.

From Leviticus we heard:

You shall not bear hatred for your brother and sister in your heart. Though you may have to reprove your fellow citizen, do not incur sin because of him. Take no revenge and cherish no grudge against any of your people. You shall love your neighbor as yourself.

Politics.

If someone would ask me, “Who did you vote for president?” I might say I voted for Trump. The response might be, “You’ve got to be kidding.”

Or if someone would ask me, ”Who did you vote for president?” I might say Hillary. The response might be, “You’ve got to be kidding.”

Or if someone would ask me, “Who did you vote for president?” I might say I wrote in my own name. The response might be, “Figures.”

In any case, the discussion must not lend itself to hatred. It’s a free country. Freedom of expression is one of our basic beliefs. The next question of the discussion shouldn’t be “Are you crazy?”

In response one might have to re-prove your argument as to your choice – re-state your intention – not immediately jump into hatred mode. And after the discussion take no revenge or cherish no grudge. Love your neighbor as yourself even in politics. Be holy. Separate yourself from the others with their closed minds and listen to the concerns of your neighbor.

Be civil about civics.

Paul to the Corinthians:

Brothers and sisters: Do you not know that you are the temple of God and that the Spirit of God dwells in you?

Pornography makes a mockery of that truth. Pornography sees people as objects and their bodies as tools. In this day and age, pornography is rampant. It seems you can’t get away from it. It’s on your TV, your tablet, your computer, your phone. It often leads to addiction. And also for the victims, human trafficking and enslavement.

The bishop is big on pornography. By that I mean he was chair of the US bishops document “Create in Me a Clean Heart: A Pastoral Response to Pornography” The bishop is also running seminar for our diocesan clergy entitled “How Do We Pastorally Respond to the Painful Grip of Pornography?” I’m sure there will be a Q&A session but without show and tell.

The bishop has all of us in parishes (clergy and lay) who have contact with children participate in a forum called “Protecting God’s Children” It’s called the Virtus Program.

One of the training articles was called “Pornography Consuming our Children” by Luke Gilkerson. The following is part of that article.

Never before in the history of telecommunications media in the United States has so much indecent (And obscene) material been so easily accessible by so many minors in so many American homes with so few restrictions. (That is form the U.S. Department of Justice memo in 1996.)

The largest consumers of Internet pornography are children between the ages of 12-15. More than half of boys and a third of the girls have seen pornography before their teenage years…. Pornography also contributes to the sexual trafficking of minors, as victims become part of the pool of videos and images circulated online. There are also grave neurological effects. As one can imagine, viewing graphic and degrading material can negatively impact a person’s thinking in profound ways. This is even truer when a person’s brain is still in its most formative stages – as in the case with teens and preteens.

Perhaps the most sobering of all is the fact that children who have seen pornography, even inadvertently, are more likely to be sexually abused by a peer or adult.

Gilkerson suggests among other ideas is to have internet use only in common areas of the home and never in the bedrooms and to install a comprehensive control software suite that includes both accountability and filtering such as Covenant Eyes.

This is a battle worth fighting, he concludes.

Jesus calls us to be perfect in dealing with our brothers and sisters in social discourse and in dealing with our younger brothers and sisters in protecting them from harm.

Let it be so. Perfectly.